

welfare reform. This is what Government should do and how we should work together.

Now, let me just say one other thing in passing. You know, the First Lady's had the chance to represent our country around the world on a couple of occasions, talking to women and mothers and grandmothers around the world. The absence of safe drinking water is the single biggest health threat to poor children all over the world, to tens of millions of them. The number of children that die in other countries from the absence of safe drinking water is absolutely staggering. I have always hoped that our country would be able to do more to help to alleviate this problem, which can be done without great expense compared to the conditions which exist in other nations. But when I became President and I realized how much more we had to do here, I thought at the time that before we can attempt to do all we might do for poor children everywhere else in the world, we ought to take care of all the children in this country who are entitled to safe drinking water so we can set the proper example.

That's what we're doing today. I am very grateful to every one of you who had a role in this.

And now I'd like to ask the children to come up and stand around me as I sign this law, because, after all, they're what the law's all about. I'd like to invite the Members of Congress who are here. And Governor, I'd like to ask you to come up as well to represent the State and local officials that are here and what they have at stake. So if you all come up, we'll sign the law.

[At this point, the President signed the legislation.]

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:20 p.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to safe drinking water advocate Diana Neidle and Gov. George V. Voinovich of Ohio. S. 1316, approved August 6, was assigned Public Law No. 104-182.

Statement on Signing the Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996

August 6, 1996

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 1316, the "Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments of 1996." This Act will provide the American people with much greater protection for the drinking water on which we all rely every day of our lives.

Safe drinking water is the American people's first line of defense for public health. In 1993, my Administration called for reinvention of safe drinking water law to improve public health protection. This Act achieves this objective by following the basic principles we articulated. It balances responsible regulatory improvements with common-sense measures to help States and water systems prevent drinking water contamination problems in the first place. It also authorizes for the first time the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds that I first proposed in 1993. These Funds will provide the resources for drinking water infrastructure that will help hundreds of communities to protect their people from harmful contaminants.

Regrettably, the Congress failed to pass this legislation prior to the August 1 deadline, so the \$725 million of previously appropriated funds are no longer available for the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds and have been transferred to the Clean Water Program. I urge the Congress to act promptly to correct this problem and to restore these monies to the Drinking Water State Revolving Funds as soon as possible.

The Act is in several respects a model for responsible reinvention of regulations. It replaces an inflexible approach with the authority to act on contaminants of greatest risk and to analyze costs and benefits, while retaining public health as the paramount value. It embraces principles of pollution prevention and a cost-effective, community-based approach for ensuring drinking water safety. It affirms the right of all Americans to know about the quality of their drinking water and the potential threats to its safety.

The consensus that has been achieved on this Act shows how strong protection of the health and environment of the American people can be achieved through partnerships with State and local governments and affected communities. The result achieved today by the Administration and Congress will give the American people confidence for years to come in the safety of their drinking water.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
August 6, 1996.

NOTE: S. 1316, approved August 6, was assigned Public Law No. 104-182.

**Statement on Signing the
Agriculture, Rural Development,
Food and Drug Administration, and
Related Agencies Appropriations
Act, 1997**

August 6, 1996

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3603, the "Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1997."

For the upcoming fiscal year, the Act provides \$13.1 billion in discretionary budget authority for important nutrition, food safety, and rural development programs, and \$40.3 billion for mandatory programs such as the Food Stamp program, the Child Nutrition program and the Commodity Credit Corporation. In addition, the Act provides urgently needed supplemental funds for the current fiscal year in two vital areas.

First, the Act provides \$12 million in FY 1996 funds to support and enhance the ability of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms to investigate the appalling incidents of church burning that have disturbed and angered Americans across the Nation. As I said when I spoke to this issue in Greeleyville, South Carolina in June, we will do everything we can to bring those responsible for these acts to justice. And so I appreciate the timely action by the Congress in providing this funding in the first available appropriations bill.

Second, the Act includes \$32 million in FY 1996 emergency funds for farmers who have been hurt by natural disasters, particularly those in the Southwest suffering from the prolonged drought and those in the Southeast affected by Hurricane Bertha. These funds will support \$100 million in low-interest direct loans. I hereby designate all of these funds as an emergency requirement pursuant to section 251(b)(2)(D)(i) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended.

For fiscal year 1997, I am particularly pleased that the Act includes my request for increased funds for the Food Safety Inspection Service. On July 6, I announced a sweeping reform of the meat and poultry inspection system, which has not been upgraded in 90 years. This investment will revolutionize the way we ensure the safety of American meat and poultry.

The Act also provides significant increases in rural development programs, to improve the quality of life in rural America and to help diversify the rural economy. In addition, the Act includes much of my proposal to create a Rural Development Performance Partnership, which will provide greater flexibility to tailor Federal assistance to local needs, reflecting my Administration's belief that there is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to the challenges facing rural areas.

I am concerned, however, that the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program is funded at \$150 million below my request. I am disappointed that the Congress failed to provide my requested increase for the WIC program in order to reach a full participation level of 7.5 million women, infants, and children.

Finally, I note that \$69.1 million of valuable agricultural research funding has been earmarked for unrequested buildings and facilities. In the Statement of Managers accompanying the Bill, the conferees have, however, expressed their intent to make FY 1997 the last year in which they earmark research funds for such purposes. It is my hope and expectation that the Congress will hold to that intent.

On balance, this is a good bill that will provide funding for important nutrition, food safety, and rural development needs as well